

12 TIPS

FOR REDUCING CHEMICAL EXPOSURES



We all come into contact with (or are exposed to) chemicals every day through the air we breathe, the food we eat, the water we drink, the products in our home, and the places we live and work. Often low-income and communities of color, especially those living near freeways, agricultural or industrial areas, may face higher exposures. Exposure to harmful chemicals can cause a wide range of health effects. While not all exposures can be avoided, small everyday actions can make a difference. **Here are some practical, low-cost steps for reducing chemical exposures.**

1

Wash your hands often with plain soap and water, especially before preparing or eating food. This helps remove chemicals that can get on our hands from dust, work, or consumer products. Choose plain soap instead of soaps labeled as “antimicrobial” or “antibacterial”.

2

Clean surfaces and floors using a damp cloth or wet mop regularly. Many chemicals can build up in household dust, and these chemicals can get into your body if you touch, swallow, or breathe in dust.

3

Try to eat fresher and less processed foods. While packaged and canned foods are helpful for busy lives, harmful chemicals from packaging and containers can get into your foods.

4

When possible, choose foods that contain less harmful metals like arsenic and mercury. Try to eat grains and seeds that are lower in arsenic like barley, farro, and quinoa. Also, choose fish that are lower in mercury like salmon, cod, and tilapia.

5

Try different cooking methods like steaming, boiling, and stewing to enjoy the foods you love. While grilling, charring, and frying foods are part of many family traditions, they can expose you to harmful chemicals.



6

When possible, use glass containers to store or heat food and drinks to prevent harmful chemicals from getting into your food. Try to avoid storing, microwaving, or placing very hot food in plastic or foam containers which can contain harmful chemicals like Bisphenol A (BPA).

7

Use pesticide-free methods to manage pests in your home, garden, and pets to reduce your exposures to harmful pesticides. Try using sticky traps, sealing cracks, and flea combs instead.

8

Choose fragrance-free products to help improve indoor air quality. Scented cleaning and laundry products, perfumes, air fresheners, candles, and personal care products smell good but may contain harmful chemicals.

9

Read product labels to find items that are made without flame retardants, parabens, phthalates, bisphenols, or PFASs. PFASs are often found in products labeled as stain- or water-resistant. Calling a manufacturer for more information can be helpful for when you are unsure.

10

Avoid smoking or vaping (or allowing others to smoke or vape) in your home, car, or around others, especially children. Secondhand smoke or vape fumes can expose you and others to harmful chemicals.

11

Open windows or use an exhaust fan when cooking or while using printers, cleaning products, paint, or other products that release harmful chemicals. This can help improve indoor air quality. If outdoor air quality is poor, like during wildfires, keep windows closed and use indoor air circulation if possible.

12

Avoid starting or idling vehicles in closed garages, especially ones attached to homes, to avoid harmful chemicals in motor vehicle exhaust. When in heavy traffic, keep car windows closed and use the recirculate button.

